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RUEAHLG/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001372

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [EPET](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGER DELTA YOUTH SUMMIT: A STARTING POINT FOR
CHANGE?

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

11. (C) Summary. Niger Delta youth leaders are preparing a plan of action and initiatives to bring peace to the Niger Delta. These efforts follow an October 2-4 summit which brought together fifty youth leaders, resulting in a 12-point communique to address the root causes of violence in the Delta. While the youth leaders' efforts are laudable, they will not gain much traction without government collaboration.
End Summary.

ACTION PLAN

12. (C) Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) is working with core youth leaders to develop a youth-driven action plan for peace in the Niger Delta. Core youth leaders, those with solid bases throughout the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Ogoni, Urhobo, Ikwerre, and Isoko communities, are tired of being associated with commercialized hostage-taking, said Kingsley Akeni, AAPW Corporate Advisor in Delta State. In a conversation with PolOff October 27, Akeni stated one of the youth leaders' quick-win initiatives was to hold three youth rallies in November. The youths were to rally against hostage taking, thuggery, and pipeline vandalization. Akeni said the youth leaders want to disassociate themselves from these criminal acts and more clearly identify with the themes of political participation, representation, and employment.

13. (C) While the Warri (Delta State) rally occurred without incident in early November, two youth leaders on the Port Harcourt planning committee were murdered by seven armed men in AAPW's Port Harcourt office November 20. AAPW's Port Harcourt Project Director Danjuma Sa'idu told Poloff that the rally has been postponed as a result. Sa'idu did not know the motivation behind the killings. Poloff has been informed the murdered youth had defected from militant Ijaw leader Ateke Tom's group. Their death was meant to assert domination and prevent further desertion, sources report. Sa'idu said the Yenagoa (Bayelsa State) rally will be held at a later date.

50 YOUTHS ATTEND PEACE SUMMIT

14. (C) Akeni told PolOff that over 50 youth leaders attended a summit October 2-4 to discuss peace and development in the Niger Delta. In attendance were Ijaw, Itsekiri, Ogoni, Urhobo, Ikwerre, and Isoko representatives from Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers States. Delta State Government, State Security Service (SSS), and a Joint Task Force commander attended the last day of the summit, when the youths issued a communique to address the root causes of violence in the Delta. The SSS agreed in advance not to arrest participants, AAPW's Port Harcourt Project Director said. The presence of the SSS at the summit and their integrity in keeping their word has served to build a modicum of confidence between them and the youth, according to Sa'idu.

15. (SBU) A 12-point communique was drafted and signed by the summitteers. In the communique, the youths demanded demilitarization of and increased political representation for the Niger Delta. One specific demand set forth in the communique is that the corrupt practices of politicians be investigated. These, like hostage-taking, are illegal means of raising money, the youths said in the communique. Referring to the 2007 elections, the communique states "...we do not want to be used by politicians as thugs." The communique also said that the creation of sustainable job opportunities is key to Niger Delta peace. To help stabilize the region, the youths suggested former militants be integrated into security forces.

JOBS FOR NIGER YOUTH KEY

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16. (C) AAPW Project Director Danjuma Sa'idu said achieving peace in the Niger Delta will be an arduous but achievable task. The key is providing jobs. Many youths are used to earning a living from work in armed groups or as hostage-takers--they need an alternative. Kashmir Boatie, a summit attendee who claims to be well-connected with Niger Delta youth, told PolOff on October 20 that "hostage laundering" benefits only a few militants and complicit government officials. Boatie was confident that dialogue with government and company stakeholders, if it leads to viable employment opportunities, could help resolve the problem. (Note: On October 26 press reports indicated that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) would hire Niger Delta youths to guard oil facilities in the creeks. The youths would complement, not replace, Joint Task Force troops. AAPW's Akeni could not confirm whether the report was tied to the summit or AAPW's efforts with the youths. He did think a few companies may have begun hiring youth independently. End Note.)

17. (C) Coast guard surveillance is another core youth leader-driven initiative that would entail oil companies hiring youths to protect facilities. A proposal is currently being drawn up to attract the oil companies. Akeni said that Shell Nigeria's country managing director, Basil Omiyi, said he would support this initiative. The youth leaders would like to become more political, reported Akeni. To become more engaged in politics, the youth will identify individuals within Government and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) who might lend a sympathetic ear. Through these efforts the core youth leaders hope to prevent the arming of youth for political gain, Akeni said.

EXPAND SUMMIT TO INCLUDE MORE YOUTHS

18. (C) Sa'idu intimated to PolOff that in order to have an

impact, the summit effort must be expanded. Two recent attacks on Shell vessels and the kidnapping of seven expatriates in Akwa Ibom show how important it is to include more youths and militants in the peace process, Sa'idu said.

Sa'idu said there are plans for another summit to include militants and youths from all south-south states, whose participation is needed to fully address Niger Delta problems. Fear of being arrested or having to face enemy youth groups will continue to deter some youths, Sa'idu admitted.

COMMENT

19. (C) AAPW, with its 14 year history of working with youths in the Niger Delta, is one of the few organizations to involve the youths themselves in finding a solution to Niger Delta violence. The creation of jobs and alternative employment that will pull the youth away from the militias and push them toward more economically productive activities is an essential building block to resolving the Niger Delta predicament. That some youth leaders participated in the summit and support the drive for jobs is a good sign. However, these leaders may not have the standing with their militant, armed contemporaries to influence them to give up the gun. Also, their programmatic objectives, although ironic, do not have a long life expectancy if the GON does not endorse and underwrite their efforts. Whether the GON will adopt these recommendations remains to be seen. END COMMENT.
BROWNE